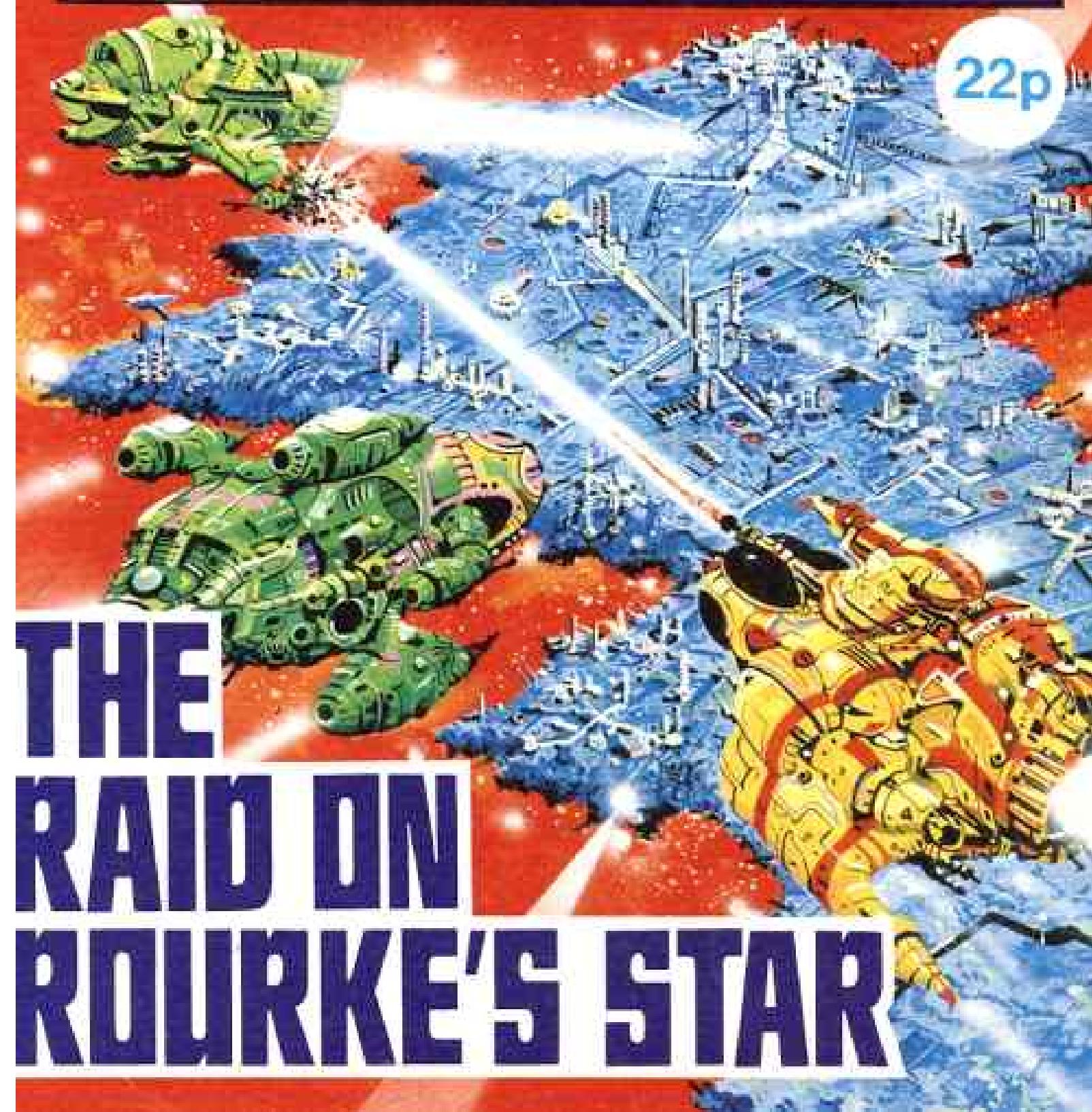


STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 138

22p

THE RAID ON ROURKE'S STAR



STARBLAZER

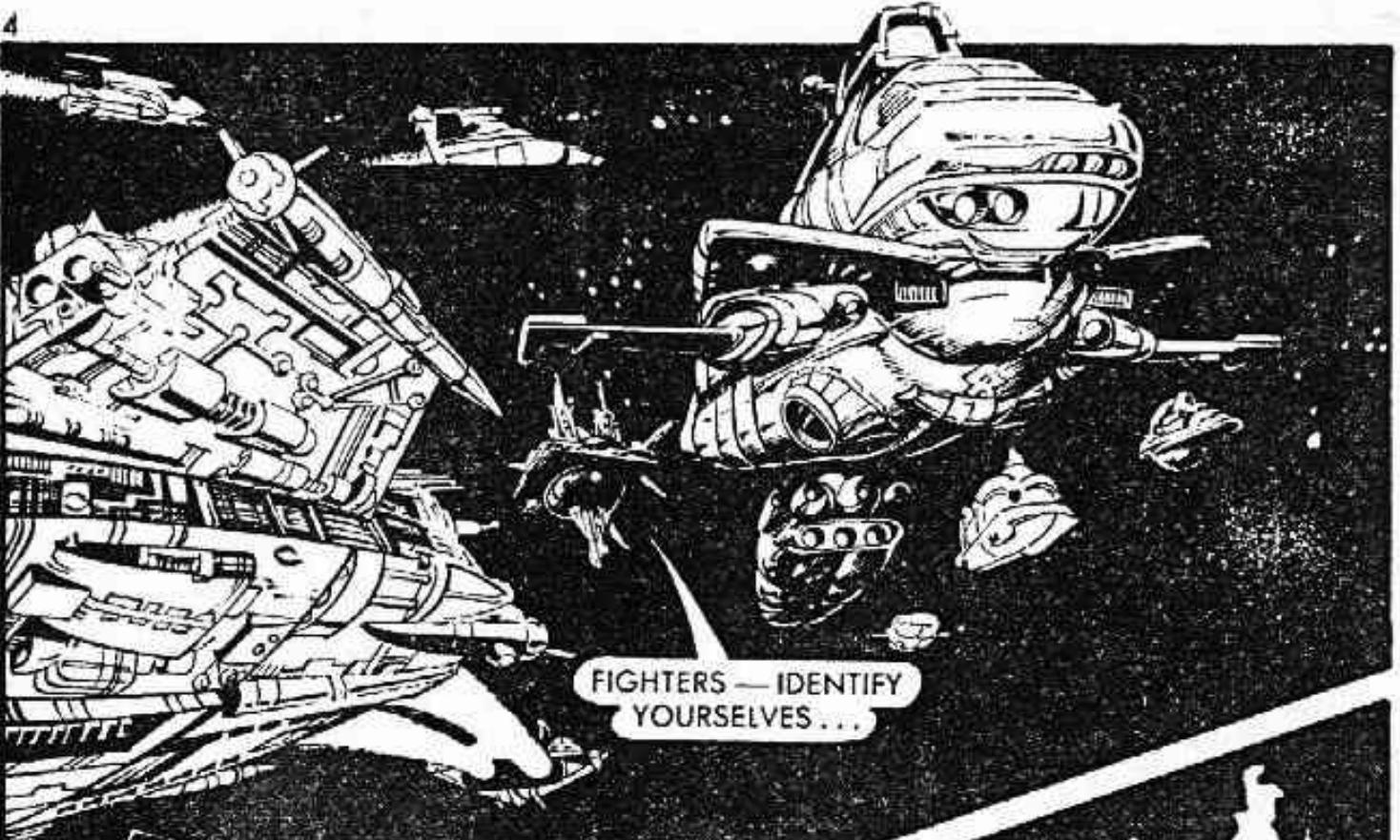
THEY WERE MISFITS, CRIPPLED SURVIVORS OF A WAR THEY THOUGHT HAD ENDED. THEIR FIGHTING DAYS WERE OVER—UNTIL THEY WERE ASKED TO PERFORM ONE LAST MISSION . . . A MISSION THAT ONLY A TEAM OF MISFITS COULD POSSIBLY PULL OFF. NONE OF THEM COULD REFUSE TO FIGHT—AND NONE OF THEM WOULD EVER BE THE SAME AGAIN AFTER . . .

DAVID LEE

THE RAID ON ROURKE'S STAR

EARTH CONVOYS TRAVELLING THROUGH DEEP SPACE HAD TO BE PROTECTED FROM FREQUENT RAIDS BY THE DAZELIANS, A RACE ENTANGLED WITH EARTH IN A STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY. CONVOY 37B CAME UNDER ATTACK.





FIGHTERS — IDENTIFY
YOURSELVES...



LET THIS VAK-KRAK MISSILE BE
MY CALLING CARD, EARTHTMAN!

IN A SHOWER OF COSMIC
DUST, CONVOY 37B's ESCORT DISAPPEARED.

THE ATTACK WAS EVENTUALLY REPORTED TO EARTH HQ —

AND SO EARTH WENT TO WAR WITH DAZEL...

MR PRESIDENT — THE DAZELIANS HAVE ATTACKED US AGAIN.

WE'VE TAKEN ALL WE CAN STAND. SUMMON THE WORLD COUNCIL. WE MUST STRIKE BACK.

THE EARTHMEN HAVE DESTROYED OUR SHIP — MAKE THEM PAY!

THE DAZELIANS HAD BATTLED OVER RIM-WORLD TRADING RIGHTS FOR YEARS. KNOWN AS THE RIM-WORLDS, THE FAR OFF PLANETS WERE A RICH SOURCE OF INCOME FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF EARTH.

COMMANDOS ATTACK!

EARTH SABOTAGE SQUADS STRUCK IN THE HEART OF ENEMY TERRITORY —

FIRING HATCH ONE

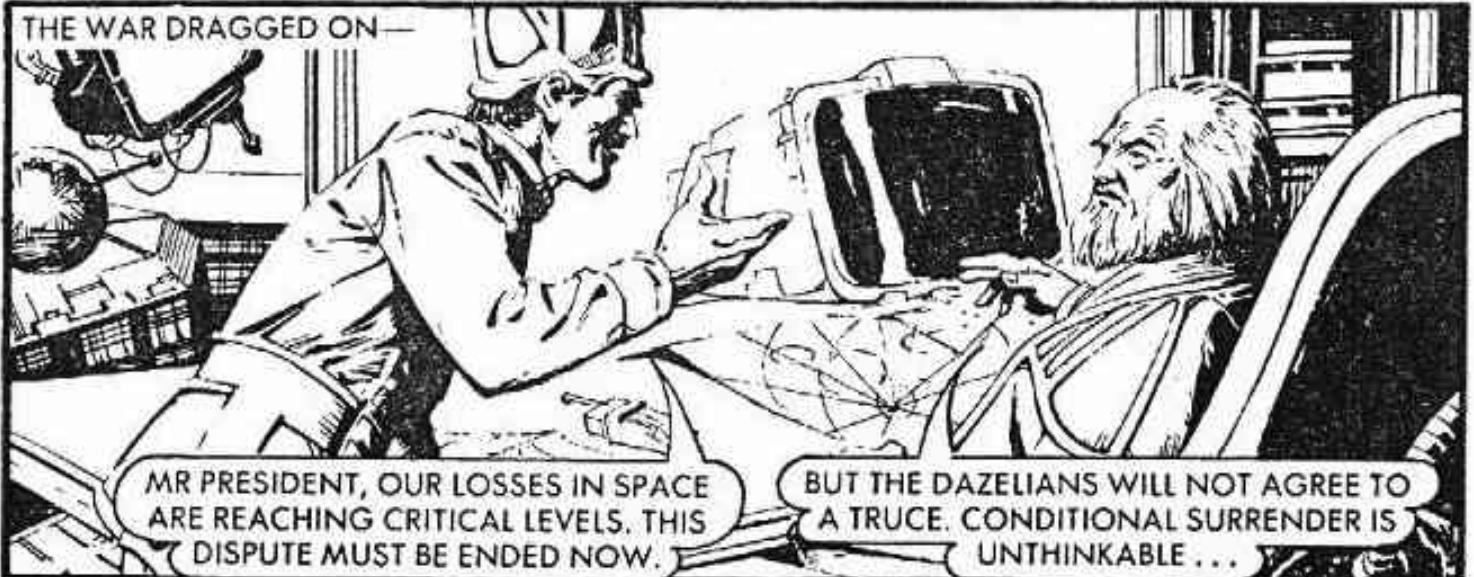
THESE GRAV-BUSTERS ARE HIGHLY VOLATILE. LET'S HOPE THEY DON'T BLOW UP ON US ...

THE HIT AND RUN RAIDS WENT ON—



HEY — THEY WORK!

THE WAR DRAGGED ON—



MR PRESIDENT, OUR LOSSES IN SPACE
ARE REACHING CRITICAL LEVELS. THIS
DISPUTE MUST BE ENDED NOW.

BUT THE DAZELIANS WILL NOT AGREE TO
A TRUCE. CONDITIONAL SURRENDER IS
UNTHINKABLE . . .

EARTH'S FINEST MINDS APPLIED THEMSELVES TO THE BUSINESS OF WINNING A WAR...

GENTLEMEN, THIS SYMBIOTIC CONTROL SYSTEM UTILISES THE MOST SOPHISTICATED COMPUTER THERE IS — THE HUMAN BRAIN — TO CONTROL ALL ASPECTS OF A SPACECRAFT'S FUNCTION.



FLEETS OF SYM-SHIPS WERE ASSEMBLED, AND EARTH WON MANY VICTORIES.

THE SYMBO CAN DO EVERYTHING AND THE ADVANTAGE OF THE HUMAN BRAIN OVER A MACHINE IS THAT IT CAN MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON INSTINCT AND FEELING...

THE PILOTS OF THESE NEW EARTH SHIPS SEEM TO KNOW WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO BEFORE WE KNOW IT OURSELVES.

...BUT STILL THE WAR DRAGGED ON.



NEGOTIATIONS TOOK PLACE —



A SUICIDE SQUAD FROM DAZEL HAD SLIPPED INTO EARTH SPACE DESTROYING HALF OF THE WORLD COUNCIL, THE WHOLE OF THE ESCORT FLEET . . AND THEMSELVES!



THE WAR WAS STEPPED UP AGAIN, BUT ON EARTH, THE PEOPLE HAD TAKEN ENOUGH...

THE WAR

STOP THE WAR!
STOP THE WAR!



ON DAZEL, IT WAS THE SAME STORY.

OUR PEOPLE CANNOT TAKE
MUCH MORE FIGHTING. WE
ARE SUFFERING APPALLING
LOSSES.



I THOUGHT THE ATTACK ON THEIR WORLD COUNCIL
DELEGATION WOULD KNOCK SOME OF THE FIGHT
OUT OF THEM. BUT NO... SO WE MUST TALK.

NEGOTIATIONS WERE LONG AND DRAWN-OUT, BUT FINALLY . . .

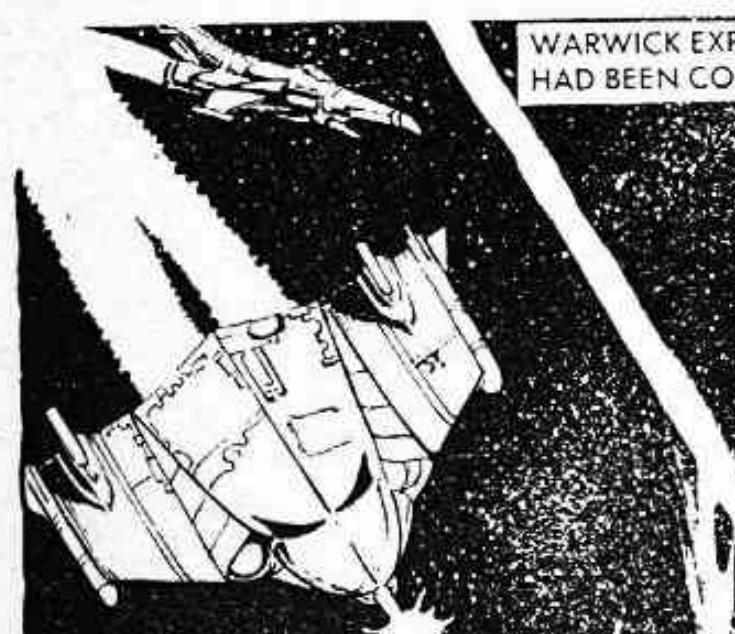
"WORLD GOVERNMENT"

THEY'VE AGREED . . . THAT'S IT . . . THE WAR IS OVER!

GENTLEMEN — I AM SECURITY CHIEF WARWICK, AND THIS MEETING HAS BEEN CALLED BECAUSE OF A REPORT FROM DAZEL.

BUT AS IN THE AFTERMATH OF ANY WAR, INTELLIGENCE AGENTS CONTINUED TO OPERATE, AND SOME MONTHS AFTER PEACE WAS DECLARED . . .

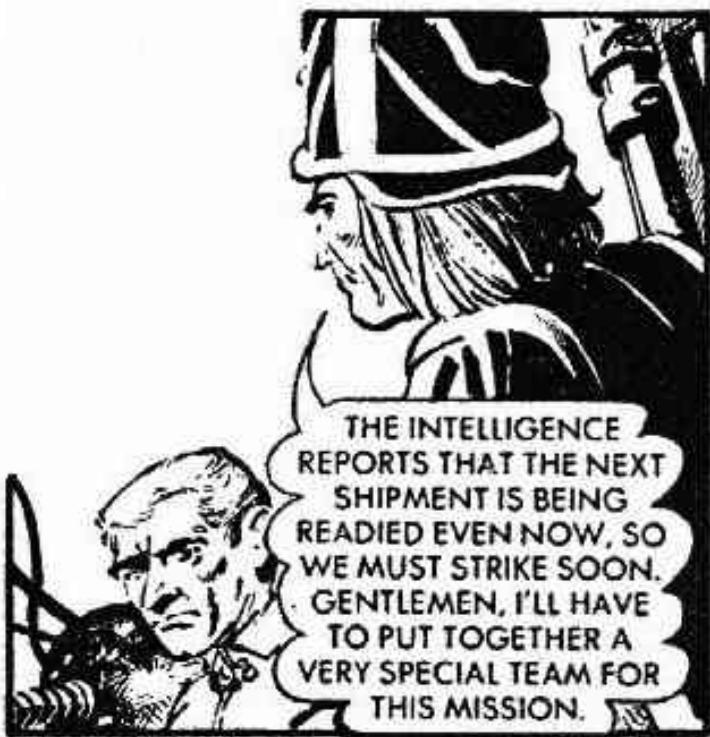
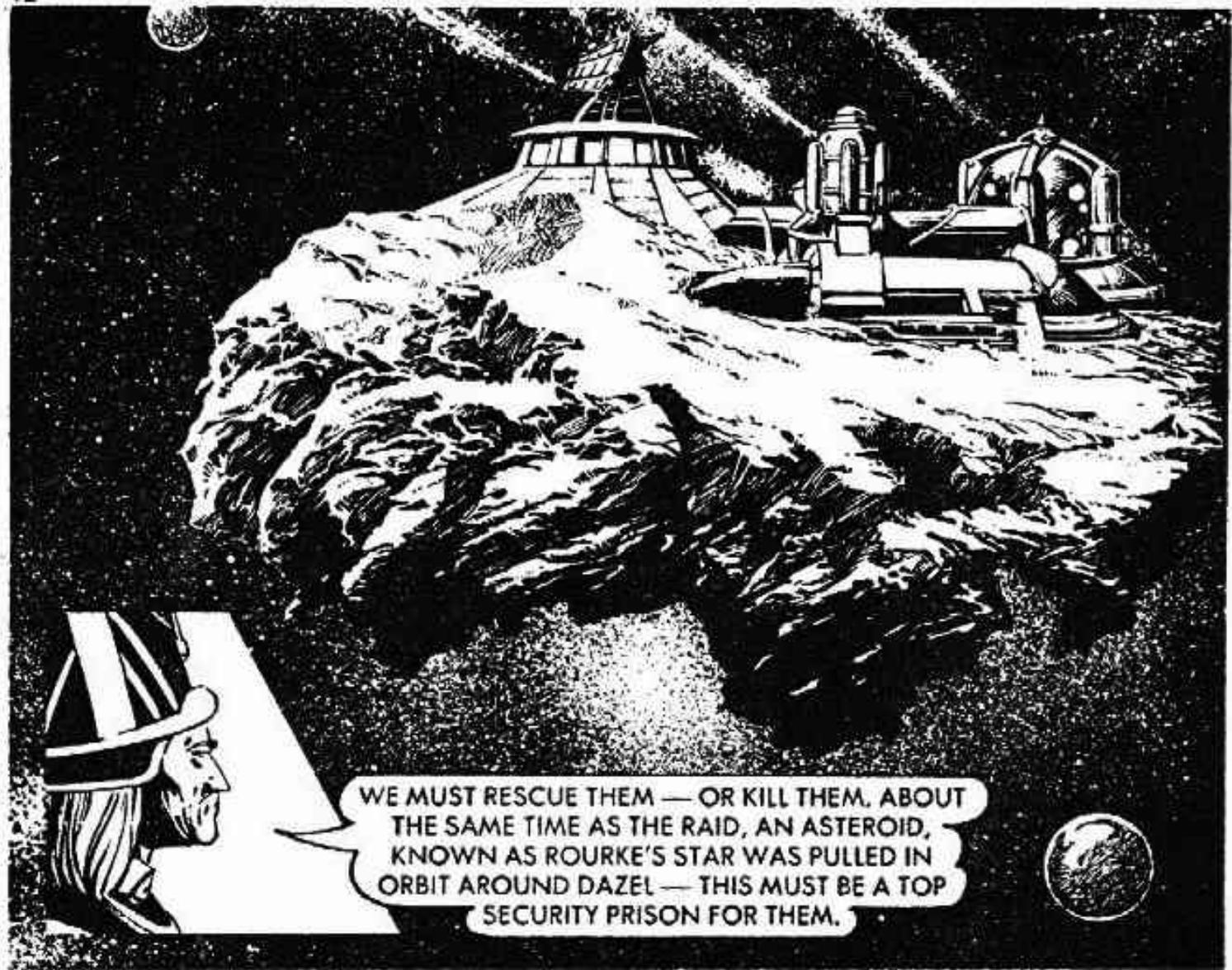
WARWICK EXPLAINED THAT A VIDRECORD OF THE ATTACK HAD BEEN COPIED, AND SMUGGLED OUT.



THE EARTH COUNCIL DELEGATION, SUPPOSEDLY DESTROYED IN EARTH-SPACE JUST PRIOR TO THE ENDING OF THE WAR, ACTUALLY SURVIVED THE ATTACK! THE SUICIDE CRAFT HAD THE BIO-PATTERNS OF THE 17 "DEAD". A FRACTION BEFORE THE EARTH SHIP WAS DESTROYED, THEY WERE ALL BEAMED OUT TO AN AWAITING TRANSPORTER-EQUIPPED WITH A BIO-BEAM SHORT RANGE TRANSPORTER.



THE ONLY REASON FOR THIS CAN BE RE-ARMING. DAZEL PLAN TO ATTACK US.



SOME TIME LATER, AT ONE OF EARTH'S MAJOR SPACEPORTS.









ONCE HIS NEW ARM WAS FITTED, KESSEL SET ABOUT RECRUITING HIS TEAM.









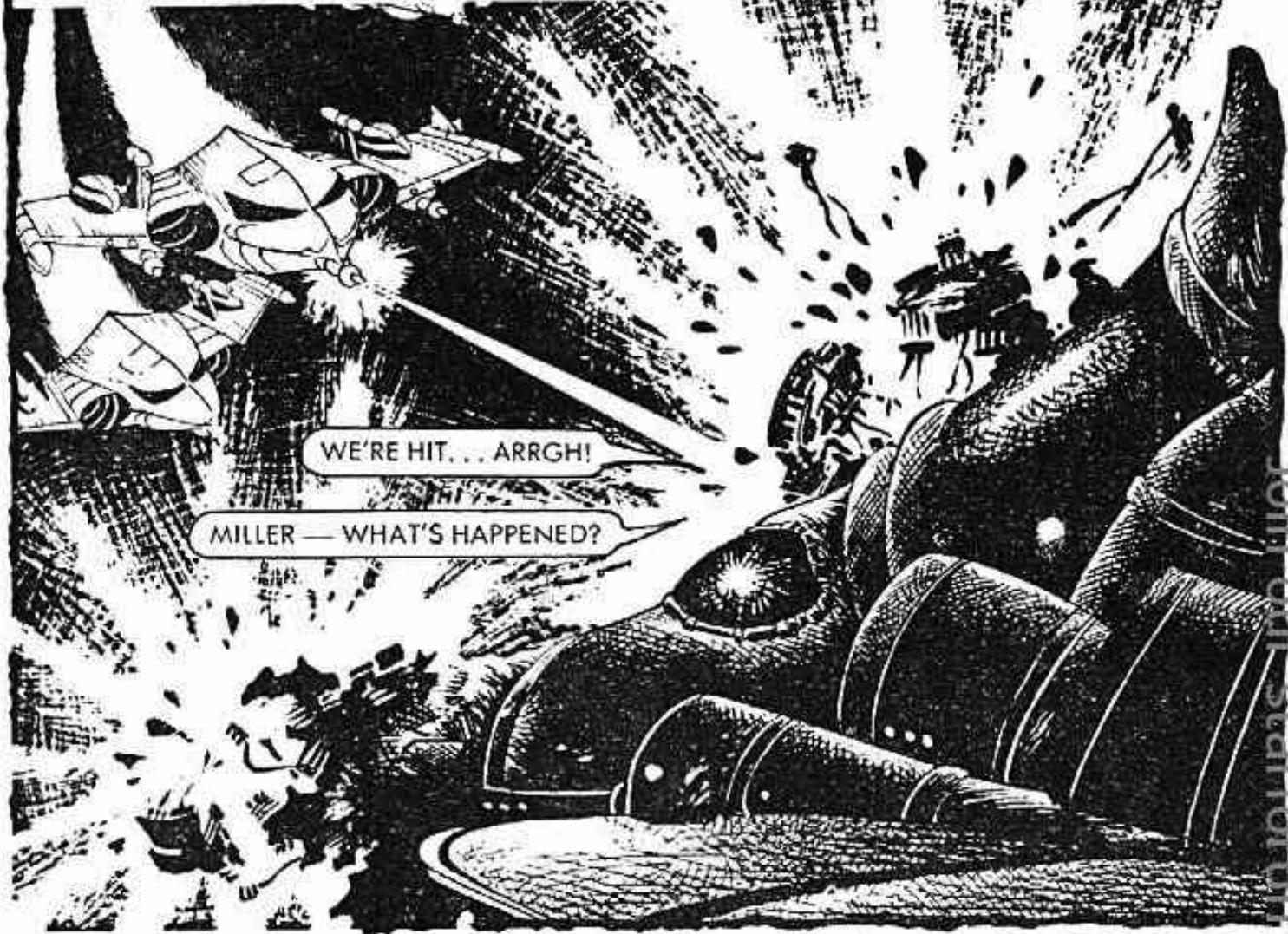
MILLER'S "ACCIDENT" FLASHED THROUGH HIS MIND —

DAZELIAN WEDGEFIGHTER FORMATION
CIRCLING TO ATTACK. YOU GOT 'EM, MILLER?

I KNEW THEY WERE COMING BEFORE
THEY KNEW IT THEMSELVES, COLONEL

TAKE THEM, MILLER!

THE SHIPS FROM EARTH WITH THEIR PILOTS AIDED BY NEURO-IMPULSE AMPLIFIERS WERE GOOD, BUT SOMETIMES JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH . . .



COMIC STANLEY

A FREAK SHOT BY A WEDGEFIGHTER HAD FUSED SEVERAL VITAL CIRCUITS. POWER FED BACK INTO THE NEURO-IMPULSE LINK UP AND . . .



KESSEL AND HIS MEN WON THAT BATTLE, AND MILLER WAS SHIPPED BACK TO EARTH.





GILL-MEN POSSESSED SURGICALLY IMPLANTED GILLS, ENABLING THEM TO LIVE AND BREATHE UNDERWATER. GILL-MEN WERE HUNTED AS FREAKS.

STUPID G-MAN! THINKS HE CAN OUT-RACE A JET POWERED SUB SUIT.

YEA? — WELL HE WON'T OUT-RACE THIS MANTA MISSILE.

BUT

DODGED IT — BUT THIS IS GETTING OUT OF HAND. THEY'RE CLOSING IN FOR THE KILL.

BUT JUST AS IT SEEMED CERTAIN THAT THE GILL MAN WAS TRAPPED . . .

WHAT THE . . . ?

HOMER HARPS! THOSE SPEARS ARE SET TO HOME IN ON THE SERVO-MECHS OF THESE SUB-SUITS!



THEN LET'S GO TOP SIDE AND GET THEM OFF!

I'M WITH YOU!



PANICKED BY THE HOMER HARPS, THE MEN IN THE SUB SUITS HEADED FOR THE SURFACE. THEIR UNSEEN ATTACKER THEN REVEALED HIMSELF.

STILL UP TO YOUR OLD TRICKS EH, SALT? YOU'LL GET HURT ONE DAY IF YOU DON'T STOP BUZZING THE SURFACE-DWELLER COLONIES DOWN HERE. BUT LISTEN - GET IN HERE... I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.

THE GILL-MAN KNOWN AS SALT ENTERED THE SUB THROUGH A SMALL AIR-LOCK, AND . . .



SALT WAS INDEED IN KESSEL'S DEBT, FOR MANY YEARS BEFORE ...



SWIMMING TOO CLOSE TO AN UNDERWATER WEAPONS-TESTING SITE, SALT HAD BEEN
CAUGHT IN AN EXPLOSION. WASHED UP ON THE SHORE, KESSEL HAD FOUND HIM ...





KESSEL TOLD SALT OF THE PROPOSED RAID ON ROURKE'S STAR.

I'LL DO IT. BUT THIS MAKES US QUIT, RIGHT?



KESSEL HAD ONE MORE TEAM-MEMBER TO RECRUIT — AT THE NORTH POLE . . .





IN SPECIALLY SHIELDED SHIPS, THE SUNFIGHTERS USED DANGEROUS TACTICS TO WIN MANY VICTORIES, BUT AS THIS PARTICULAR ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED ...

WE'RE HIT, CAPTAIN AURIC.
WE'RE... WE'RE HEADING INTO THE SUN!

THE GUIDANCE
CONTROL... GONE...



THE SUNFIGHTER SHIP DRIFTED TOWARDS THE HEART OF THE SUN...

DEAD... ALL OF THE CREW DESTROYED
BY THIS TERRIBLE HEAT. I'M NEXT...

AURIC WAS TOUGH — TOUGHER THAN EVEN HE HAD THOUGHT. HORRIBLY BURNED, WITH HIS SHIP LITERALLY MELTING ABOUT HIM, HE MANAGED TO REACH THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM AND . . .



RETRO-FIRE COMPLETE . . . SHIP ANSWERING TO CONTROLS . . . THANK GOODNESS.



AURIC HAD BEEN CLOSER TO THE HEART OF THE SUN THAN ANY MAN WHO EVER LIVED AND HE'D SURVIVED TO TELL THE TALE, BUT SINCE THAT DAY HE COULD NOT STAND HEAT OF ANY KIND.

COME WITH ME, AND YOU'LL GET A SETTLEMENT ON PLUTO.





KESSEL'S TEAM WERE FINALLY READY TO LAUNCH THE RAID ON ROURKE'S STAR

LET'S GO!!



AS THE TEAM NEARED THE PLANET DAZEL ...



YOU KNOW THE PLAN, AURIC. I'LL BE BACK SOON. HOW'S THAT WET SUIT, SALT?



FINE! IT'LL DO ME UNTIL WE REACH DAZEL.

LEAVING THE SYM-SHIP IN A SHROUDED SHUTTLE CRAFT, KESSEL AND SALT LANDED UNOBSERVED ON DAZEL AND MADE THEIR WAY TO A SPACEPORT.



THAT BIG SHIP'S THE WATER SUPPLY FOR ROURKE'S STAR. THAT'LL BE YOUR HOME FOR A WHILE, SALT.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, KESSEL.

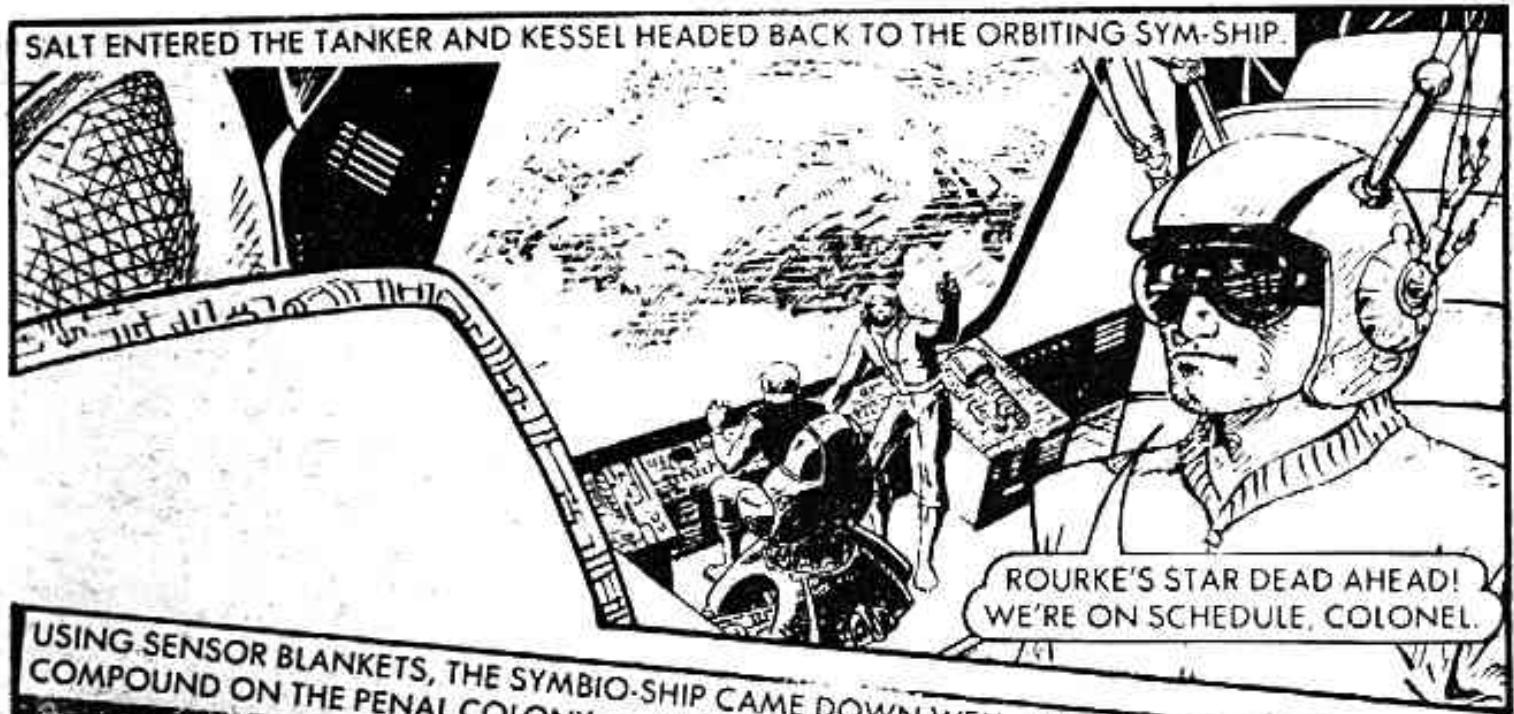


SENTRIES WERE DISPOSED OF SILENTLY AND EFFICIENTLY. WITH THE WATER-LOADING OPERATION BEING COMPLETELY AUTOMATED, KESSEL AND SALT HAD NO FURTHER GUARDS TO WORRY ABOUT. AND ONCE IN THE COMMAND ROOM —

THAT WET SUIT, PLUS ALL THE LIQUID IN THIS TANKER, WILL HELP SHIELD YOU FROM THE ACCELERATION.

I'LL SEE YOU AT THE COMPOUND ON ROURKE'S STAR IN A COUPLE OF DAYS.

SALT ENTERED THE TANKER AND KESSEL HEADED BACK TO THE ORBITING SYM-SHIP.



USING SENSOR BLANKETS, THE SYMBIO-SHIP CAME DOWN WELL AWAY FROM THE
COMPOUND ON THE PENAL COLONY.



THE TEAM APPROACHED THE COMPOUND WHERE THE EARTH SCIENTISTS WERE BEING HELD.

HOLD IT! BEYOND THIS POINT WE'RE IN RANGE OF THE VISI-SCRAMBLERS. PUT THE EYE-SHIELD ON, AURIC. MILLER CAN LEAD US THE REST OF THE WAY.

VISI-SCRAMBLERS INTERFERED WITH THE OPTIC NERVES PREVENTING THE VICTIM FROM SEEING.

SOON, AT THE VERY EDGE OF THE COMPOUND'S FIREFIELD . . .

THE SYMBIO LINK-UP FED ALL THE SHIP'S CHARTS DIRECTLY INTO MY BRAIN—AND ACCORDING TO THEM, THIS IS THE POINT FROM WHICH WE LAUNCH THE ATTACK.

IF EVERYTHING'S GONE TO PLAN, OUR AGENT INSIDE THE COMPOUND SHOULD CUT OUT THE SCANNERS ANY MINUTE NOW AND OPEN UP A CLEAR RUN FOR AURIC.

THE TERRAN AGENT WAS INDEED WORKING FEVERISHLY—

TWO SCREENS CUT OUT

MALFUNCTION...

DON'T WORRY—THE FIRE FIELD'S
ALREADY ACTIVATED ITSELF ...

OUTSIDE—

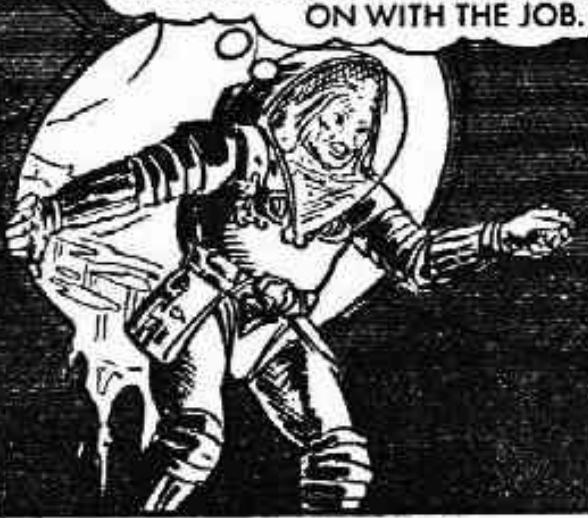
I FEEL LIKE A CRISP ALREADY—AND YOU'RE GOING INTO THAT INFERNO, AURIC?

I SURVIVED THE SUN—THIS WILL BE EASY!



AS AURIC PLUNGED INTO THE WHITE-HOT HELL OF THE FIREFIELD, BACK INSIDE THE
COMPOUND THE WATER-SHIP HAD ARRIVED—

WHEW—THAT WAS SOME RIDE UP FROM DAZEL. STILL, NOW I'M HERE I'D BETTER GET ON WITH THE JOB.



SALT SET ABOUT COMPLETING HIS PART OF THE PLAN AS AURIC, HIS PROTECTIVE SUIT AFLAME, MADE HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE COMPOUND GUARDS . . .



SHOOT HIM BEFORE IT'S
TOO . . . ARRRGH!



THE SECOND GUARD ALSO
MET HIS END—



INSIDE THE COMPOUND BUILDINGS, SECURITY WAS LAX. AURIC MET NO FURTHER TROUBLE AS HE SEARCHED FOR, AND FINALLY FOUND, THE MISSING EARTH SCIENTISTS.

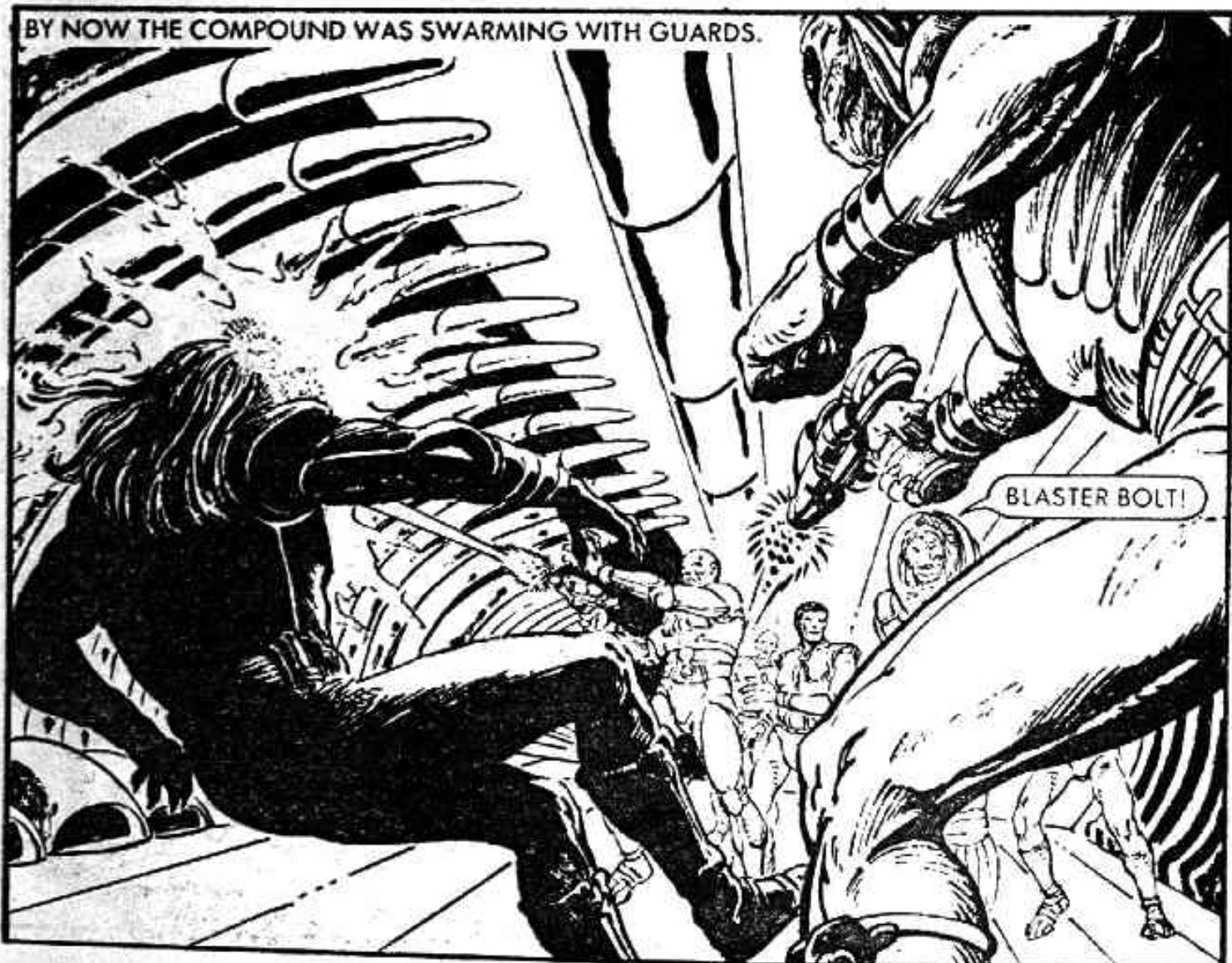
... AND THAT'S HOW I GOT HERE.

VERY WELL! WE MUST NOW GO TO THE COMPUTER CENTRE.

BUT AT THE COMPUTER CENTRE, CHAOS ALREADY REIGNED...

SALT—YOU DID THIS?

YEAH! THE PLAN WAS FOR ME JUST TO HELP WARWICK'S MAN HERE ON THE INSIDE. BUT HE MANAGED HIMSELF—I THOUGHT OF ALL THAT WATER GOING TO WASTE, SO I COOKED UP A LITTLE SCHEME OF MY OWN.



IT WAS ONLY THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE WHICH ALLOWED THE EARTH PARTY TO ESCAPE FROM THE COMPOUND IN ONE PIECE, BUT THE DAZELIANS WERE RECOVERING FAST—



KEEP MOVING—THE SHIP
WILL MEET US HALF WAY.

I THINK THE GUARDS HAVE FIGURED THAT OUT, TOO.
THEY'RE BRINGING UP THE BIG GUNS.

ON BOARD THE SYM-SHIP, MILLER HAD ALREADY BEEN ALERTED TO THE DANGER—



STAND BY ON THE PLASMA CANNON,
COLONEL. DAZELIAN RETORT RAYS ARE
LOCKING ON OUR RENDEZVOUS POSITION.



I'M READY, MILLER.

WITH MILLER'S GUIDANCE AND KESSEL'S MARKSMANSHIP, THE STUNNED DAZELIANS STOOD LITTLE CHANCE.

GET THE SHIP BEFORE IT ...

WITH TIME RUNNING OUT, MILLER MADE THE RENDEZVOUS.

UP YOU COME, GENTS. WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TO GET YOU AND WE'RE NOT LEAVING WITHOUT YOU.

MILLER TOOK THE SYM-SHIP AWAY FROM ROURKE'S STAR, BUT NOT AWAY FROM DANGER—

WEDGEFIGHTERS, COLONEL—LAUNCHED FROM DAZEL AND CLOSING FAST. THEY MUST HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE RAID.

DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE WORD TO GET AROUND, DID IT? TRY TO OUT-RUN THEM, MILLER—I'LL DO WHAT I CAN WITH THE PLASMA CANNON.

THE WEDGEFIGHTERS ATTACKED—

CLOSE CALL, COLONEL...

DON'T STAND THERE COMPLAINING,
AURIC—GET TO A GUN.

MILLER'S PILOTING WAS EXPERT. THE SHIP SUSTAINED ONLY MINOR DAMAGE, BUT ACCOUNTED FOR SEVERAL WEDGEFIGHTERS.

KESSEL AND HIS TEAM LOOKED SET FOR A CLEAN ESCAPE, UNTIL—

“THEY'RE NOT QUITTING, COLONEL.”

“WE CAN'T HOLD THEM ALL OFF. WE NEED HELP, MILLER. PUT A CALL OUT TO THE SPACE NAVY.”

KESSEL AND HIS MEN CONTINUED TO FIGHT AS THE DISTRESS MESSAGE WAS BEAMED OUT.

“ANY JOY, MILLER?”

“IT'S ODD, COLONEL—
INSTRUMENTS SHOW THAT THE
MESSAGE IS BEING RECEIVED, BUT
THEY DON'T ACKNOWLEDGE.”

“SONS OF DOGS! THEY'RE GOING TO LEAVE
US ALL HERE TO DIE.”

“EASE OFF, SALT!”

SOMEONE WANTS THESE BIG BRAINS KILLED. WE WERE SET UP—WHOEVER PLANNED THIS KNEW WE WOULD BE KILLED. KNEW WE WOULDN'T GET BACK.

THIS WAY, WARWICK AND HIS BOYS CAN STILL CLAIM THEY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT AND THE THREAT OF RESTARTING THE WAR DOESN'T ARISE. OF COURSE, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO BE THE LOSERS HERE . . .

THAT'S CRAZY TALK! OUR CALL CAN'T BE ACKNOWLEDGED OR EARTH WOULD BE OFFICIALLY ADMITTING THAT SHE WAS BEHIND THE RAID.

NOT NECESSARILY, COLONEL . . .

MILLER ASKED FOR HIS SEALED CRATE TO BE BROUGHT UP FROM THE HOLD . . .

I HAD THAT THING BUILT TO MY OWN DESIGN. IT'S JUST A PROTOTYPE, BUT I WAS HOPING TO SELL IT TO THE SPACE NAVY AND MAYBE GET BACK INTO SPACE ON THE STRENGTH OF IT . . .

AND YOU SAY IT JUST HOOKS INTO THE SYMBIO LINK-UP?



THE DAZELIANS WERE PUZZLED BY THE CHANGE OF TACTICS ...

THEY'RE TURNING ...
HEADING BACK AT US.

AND TOWARDS
CERTAIN DEATH!

THERE'S A LOT OF STRAIN INVOLVED IN
THIS OPERATION, COLONEL. I HAVE TO
MENTALLY JAM THE DAZELIAN
COMPUTER PROGRAMMES, AND THAT'S
NOT EASY ...

DO YOUR BEST, MILLER.
AND DO IT ...







EVEN AS MILLER SPOKE . . .

THAT HURT! HOW BAD IS IT, MILLER?

PRETTY BAD! GUN-SIGHTING COMPUTER'S SHORTED OUT. WITHOUT IT, AT THIS SPEED, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TROUBLE LOCKING ON A TARGET.

THEN IT'S ALL UP TO YOU! GET US RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THEM AND REALLY LET RIP. WE'LL COVER AS BEST WE CAN.

CHECK, COLONEL!

WITH INCREDIBLE DARING, THE EARTH SHIP SPED INTO THE VERY CENTRE OF THE DAZELIAN FORMATION . . .



THEY'RE HITTING US, BUT I
THINK MILLER'S GOING TO DO IT!

HALF A DOZEN WEDGEFIGHTERS LEFT.
COME ON, MILLER ... COME ON!

THE DAZELIANS DON'T KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM.
EVEN WITHOUT OUR GUN-SIGHT COMPUTER
THEY'RE SITTING DUCKS.

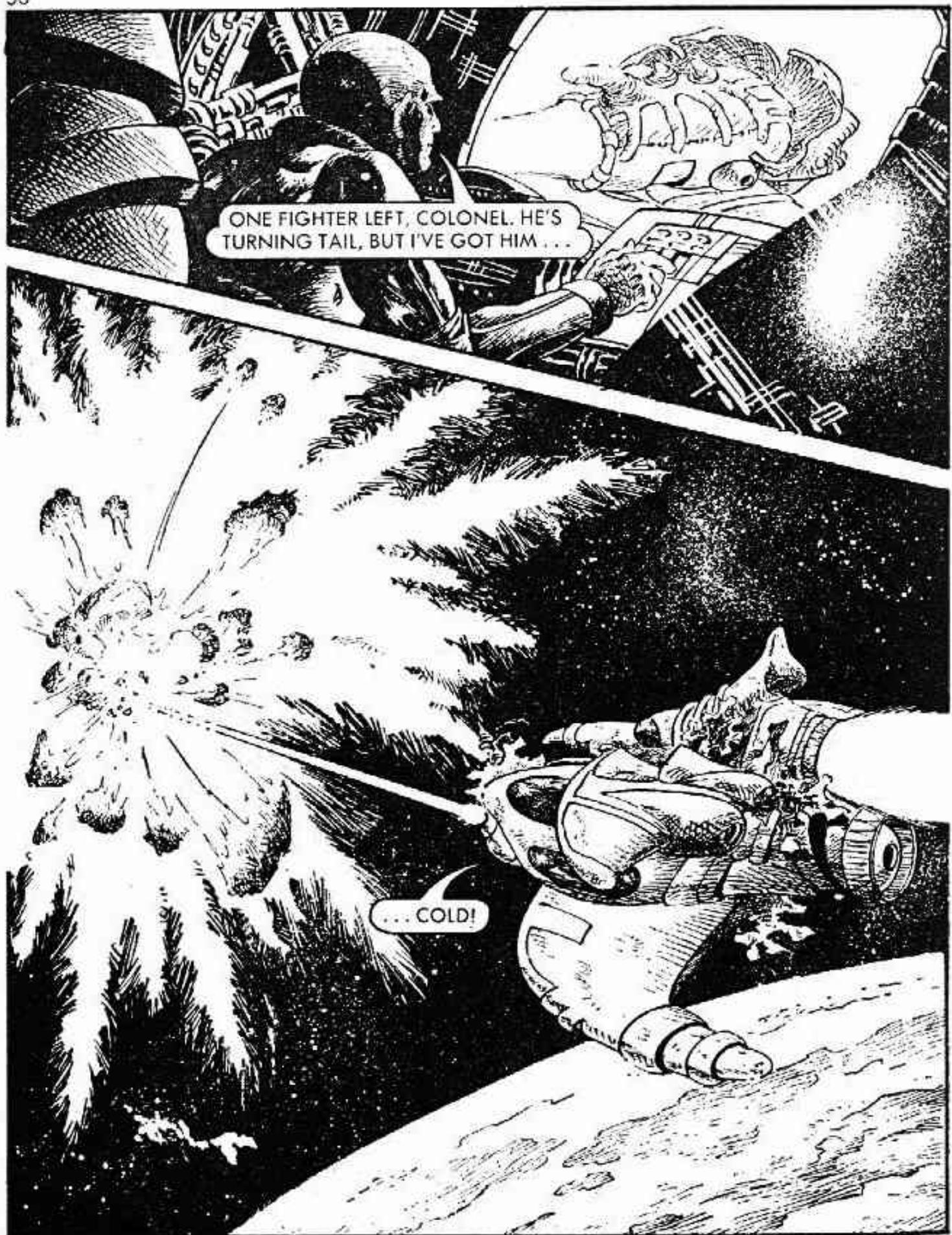
UNNNGH ... PAIN ...

THE WEDGEFIGHTERS WERE THROWN OUT OF CONTROL BY THE MILLER MIXER.

YEAH—BUT HOW LONG CAN MILLER
STAND THE STRAIN?

SALT'S QUESTION WAS ANSWERED DRAMATICALLY ...

MILLER'S HAD IT. I'LL TAKE OVER ON
MANUAL. HOW'S THE OPPONENT
LOOKING, AURIC?



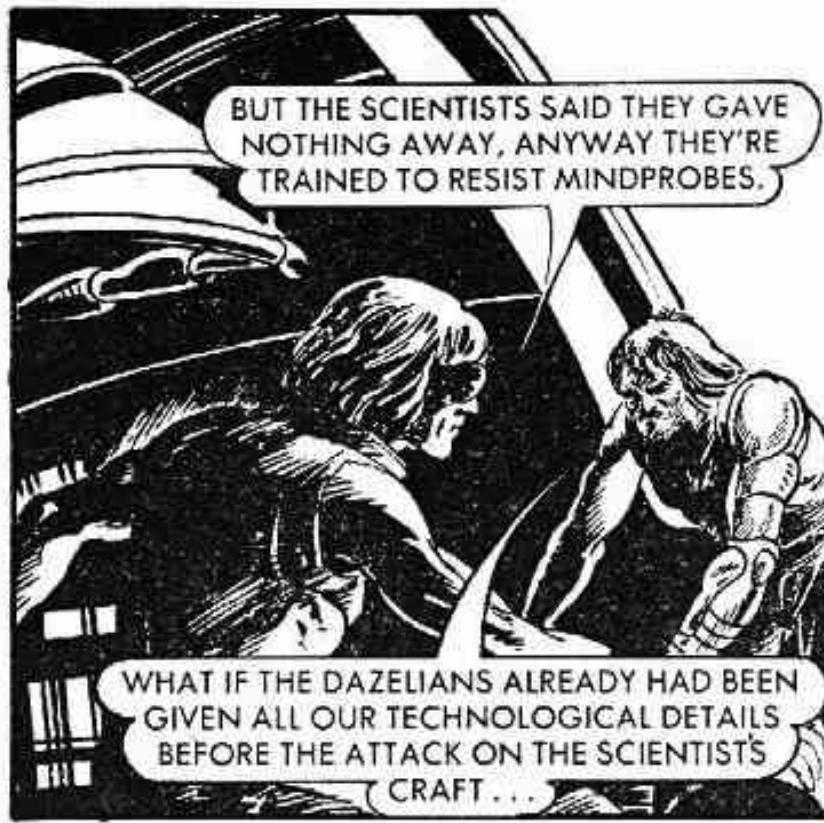
KESSEL'S TEAM OF RAIDERS MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO EARTH WITH THEIR VALUABLE CARGO.



YOU'LL BE OKAY, MILLER. A
COUPLE OF DAYS REST AND YOU'LL BE FINE.

SURE, COLONEL.





AND WE WILL!

KESSEL USED HIS PROSTHETIC ARM TO RUPTURE THE SECURITY LOCK —







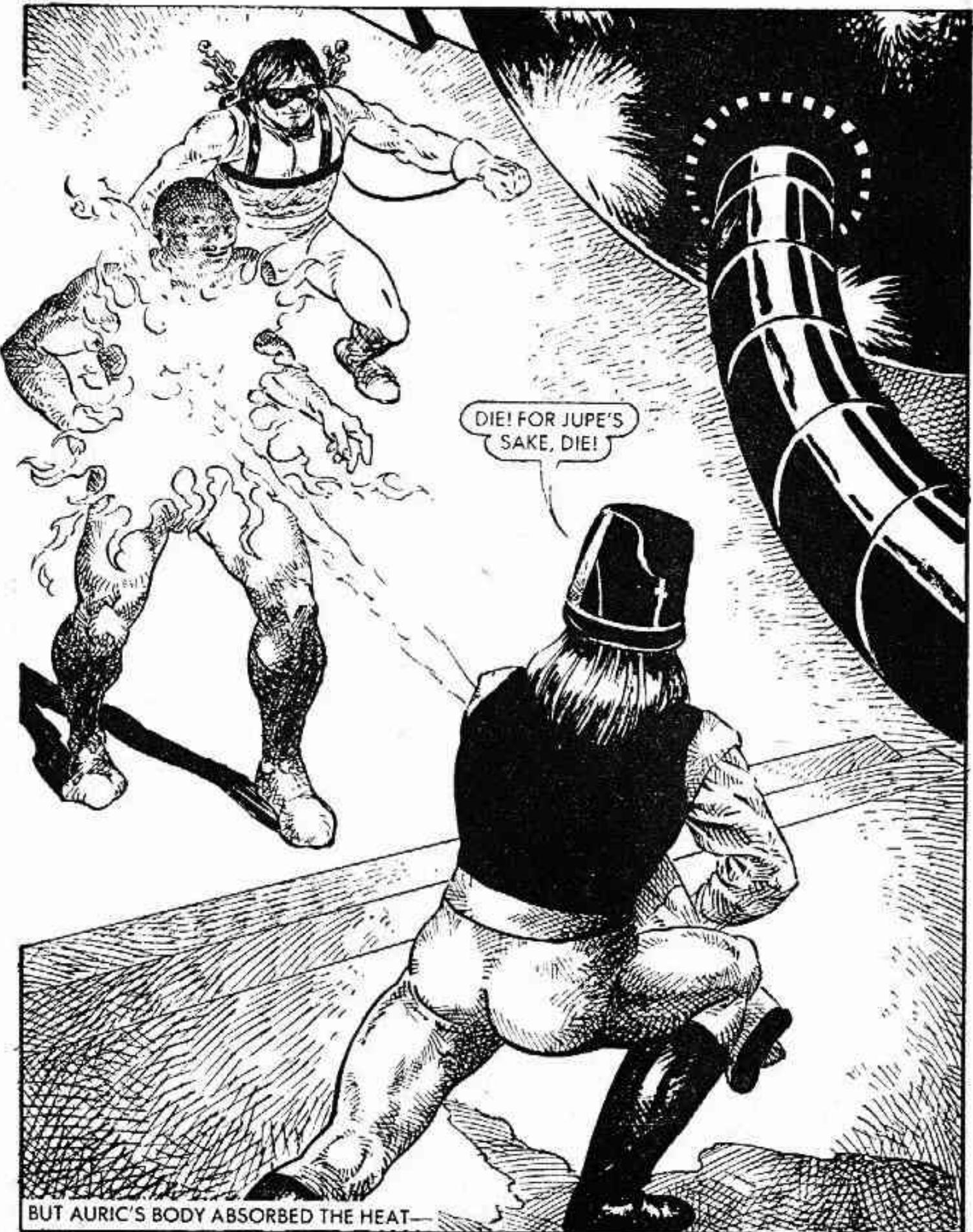


MY DAZELIAN COUNTERPART AND I WORKED OUT A SCHEME TO TAKE CONTROL OF AN EARTH-DAZEL ALLIANCE. TO DO THIS, ONE NATION HAD TO SURRENDER. IT WAS DECIDED THAT AS I HAD ACCESS TO STATE SECRETS THEY WOULD BE PASSED TO AID IN EARTH'S DEFEAT. THE SCIENTIST INCIDENT WAS A BLUFF TO AVERT SUSPICION. YOU SEE, IF I'D KILLED THEM IT WOULD THEN BE REALISED THAT THE KNOWLEDGE THE DAZELIANS HAD GAINED COULDN'T HAVE COME FROM THE SCIENTISTS—THERE WAS A RISK OF A MASS SECURITY CHECK AND ME BEING FOUND OUT.



FOOL! NOW YOU DIE!

I THINK NOT!





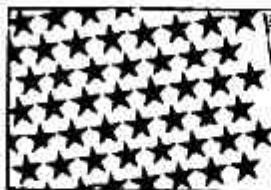


STARBLAZER

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STARBLAZER'S

GUIDE TO THE SPACEMEN

58-59

Apollo 17 was launched on December 7, 1972 on a mission lasting 12 days 13 hrs 51 mins 59 secs. The command module pilot was Commander Ronald Ellwin Evans, 39, USN (right), accompanied by the twelfth man on the Moon, Harrison Hagen " Jack " Schmitt, 37. Evans is now in business and Schmitt served his country as a politician.

